

CASTOR CHURCH.

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SAINT KYNEBURGHA.

PRICE—THREEPENCE.



THE CHURCH OF S. KYNEBURGHA.

S. Kyneburgha was the third of the four daughters of Penda, King of Mercia, and married Aelfrith, King of Northumbria. Leaving her royal estate, as the old Chronicle puts it, *mundo contempto*, she came, with her sister, S. Kynswitha, to Castor about the year 650 A.D. Not far from the River Ven (i.e. Nen) she built a little Nunnery (*multis congregatis virginibus*) and lived a life renowned for its piety and devotion. The two sisters died and were buried here. At the beginning of the 11th century, in the time of the Abbot Elusinus, the bodies of the sister saints were translated to Peterborough. The anniversary of the translation was celebrated by the monks on March 7th, and to-day in the Cathedral Church, a Chapel is still dedicated to S. Kyneburgha. Of S. Kyneburgha's convent nothing now remains, though there are still traces of Saxon work incorporated into the Norman Church. It is interesting to note that

in the field called Normangate, near the Nen, a ridge can be seen to this day, which is locally known as the "Lady Conneyburrow's Way", evidently a contraction of Kyneburgha.

The date of the Norman Church is known, for on a semi-circular frame of stone, over the Priest's Door in the south wall of the Chancel, is the following inscription:—

XV. KL.
MAI DEDICA
TIO HVI ECCL'E
A.D. MCXXIIII

In full this reads:—

Quinto decimo Kalendas
Maías Ecclesiae
Anno Domino MCX XIIII

or

The dedication of this Church was on the
17th April, 1124.

(It is evident the last figures of the date were cut by a different hand).

OUTSIDE THE CHURCH.

No attention need be drawn to the *Tower*. It has stood in its wonderful grandeur over 800 years, a landmark indeed through the centuries.

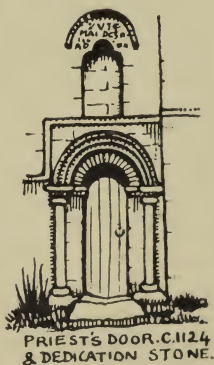
"It would not be easy to name a finer work of this period among the parochial churches of England." (The *Spire* is a 14th century addition).

Notice the quaint carving of a little *Ram's Head* on the South Wall of the Chancel.

The *Tympanum* over the South Porch was possibly part of the ornamentation of a doorway in the Saxon Church. On the walls of the North Transept can be seen the traces of the Doorway which led to the Shrine of the Saint, and interesting remains of the Norman Window. Note also how the builders utilised Roman tiles and masonry when erecting the Church.

The *South Porch*, with its roof is interesting. The fine old Oak Door of the Church bears the inscription, *Richardus Beby, Rector Ecclesiae de Castre fecit*, or Richard Beby, Rector of Castor, made this. The name Richard Beby is not recorded amongst the Rectors of Castor, but possibly *Richard de Leycester*, 1372, is the same person.

The Church was originally, and is still, Cruciform in shape, with central Tower and South Porch. The present Church Doorway was the Porch Door-



way of the Norman Church. The remains of a window of the early Church can be seen at the east end of the South Aisle, and there are also interesting indications of the various alterations, made at different times, in the roof of the Church.

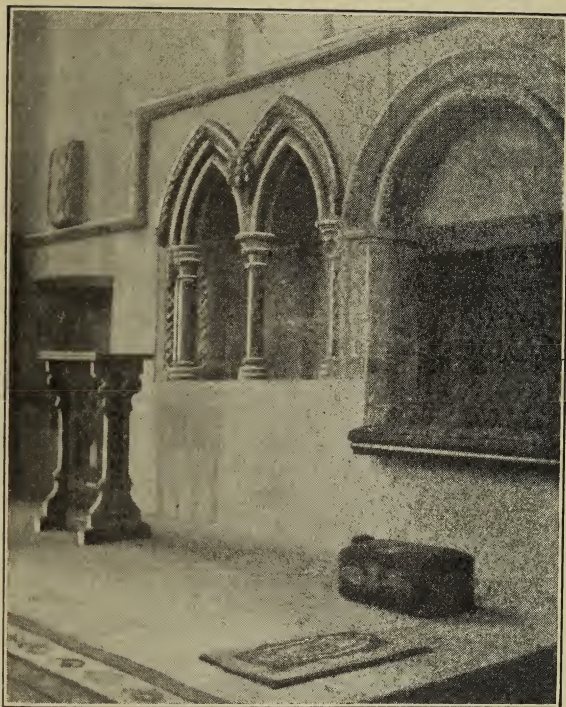
Entering the Church, notice the "sturdy" old Alms Chest or Peter's Pence Box, made from a solid block of oak. Two silver groats (Henry VIII) were found in this box, on its re-discovery some years ago, in the Belfry. The Chest had three locks; alas, we fear the custodians in early days, had not much mutual trust.

The Pillars in the Nave date from 1250 A.D., those on the south side being the earlier. Note the differences in the design of the Capitals.

The Decorative Carvings on the Capitals of the Pillars under the Tower, are well worthy of careful study, and there is a great variety of subject, clear cut and vigorous—"The fight for the fair lady", "The Boar Hunt", "Man Versus Lion" and others. Two on the north side are restoration work.

In the Chancel, notice the Sedilia, the graceful double Piscina, and also the smaller Piscina, which has a small flue, and is in an unusual position on the North Wall.

The Carved Stone, now set in the South Wall, was found a few years ago beneath the Chancel pavement. This was probably part of the Saxon Shrine of S. Kyneburgha.



SOUTH WALL OF CHURCH.

The recumbent figure in the Chancel is by local tradition said to be the effigy of Virgilius, Rector 1228, but is probably of later date.

In the Chantry, now used as a memorial Chapel and Vestry, there is a central pillar, with a graceful clustered column. Evidently there used to be two chapels in the Chantry. For many years this part of the Church was used as the village school.

In the floor near the Screen, there is a quaint rhyming epitaph.

In the Vestry there are photographs taken from the portraits of a number of the Bishops of the Diocese. For over two hundred years this living was attached to the Bishopric, and the Bishops of Peterborough from Thomas Dove, 1613, to G. Davys, 1840, were Rectors of Castor.

Twelve penny Loaves of Bread are placed on a Ledge in the South Aisle each Sunday morning and given after the Service to poor parishioners. This is from a Bequest left in 1736.

In the North Transept was the Shrine of the Saint. The Stone Screen has been partially restored. The two Aumbries in the wall should be noted.

The Stone at present beneath the Screen, was found in the Churchyard; it is supposed to be the base of a Saxon Cross.

At the end of the Nave, protected by a Canvas Screen, is an ancient *Mural Painting*. There are three scenes, depicting the Trial and Martyrdom of S. Catherine. This is considered early 14th century work.

An embattled Staircase in the North Transept leads to the Belfry, passing through a curious Priest's Chamber, with fine old oak roof with crude carvings.

There are six Bells with inscriptions:

- 1 and 2 Henricus Bagley, nos fecit 1700.
- 3 and 4 Henry Bagley of Ecton made me 1700.
- 5 Cantate Domino, Canticum novem Henricus fecit 1700.
6. To the Church the living Call and to the grave do summon all. Henry Bagley made me 1700.

The ancient *Font* was found in pieces in the Churchyard and restored and re-dedicated in 1929.

A List of Rectors from 1228 hangs in the Church.

The Church Registers date from 1538, and are in good condition.



REMAINS OF SAXON
CARVING - (ST. MARK?)

APPROXIMATE DATES.

Saxon Church and Convent, 650 A.D.

Norman Church Dedicated, 1124 A.D.

Pillars of Nave—The Porch, Chancel, 1250-1300
A.D.

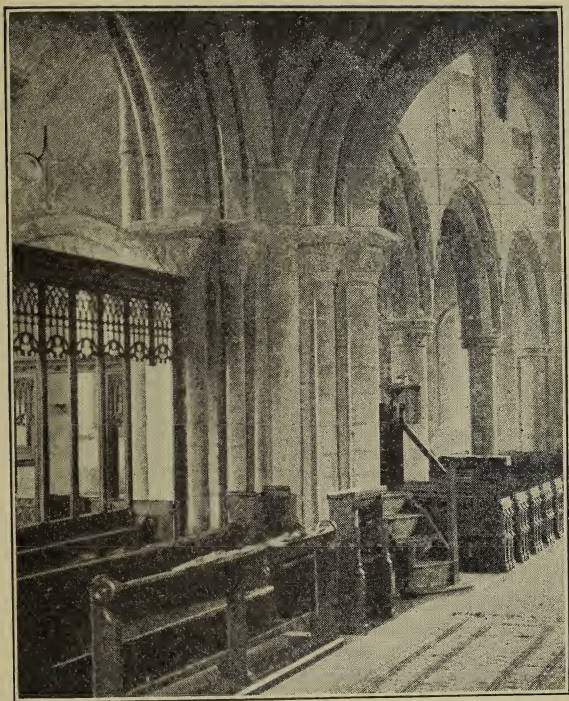
Spire, 1350 A.D.

Roof and Nave Windows, 1450 A.D.

CASTOR.

Castor was a place of great importance during the Roman occupation of Britain, for here was situated one of their larger towns called Durobrivæ. It was a garrisoned Camp, on the great arterial road, Ermine Street, and a place where extensive pottery works were established. The ware made from Castor clay was noted throughout the Empire.

Owing to this industry, a large settlement grew up on both sides of the Nen. The outline of the ancient Town of Durobrivæ can be traced from Church Hill, the fortified part being near the village of Chesterton, the Pottery works and Kilns close to the present Castor railway station, and the residential part, with the larger villas, in the vicinity of the Church. The Baths are only a few feet beneath the Nursery Gardens at the foot of Church Hill, and were fed by a stream which flows under the Church. Extensive excavations were made by Mr. E. T. Artis in 1820, and many buildings of the Roman period were discovered. Plans were made at the time, but all Buildings and Pavements were subsequently covered in.



CHOIR AND NAVE LOOKING WEST.

The only traces of Roman masonry now visible, are the pieces jutting out of the Rectory Wall on Stocks Hill, at the east side of the Churchyard, and smaller remains in the Lane on the north side. A piece of tessellated pavement was taken up in 1820, and relaid in the dairy at Milton. Coins belonging to the Period are often found in this neighbourhood, especially in Normangate Field. Burial urns, fragments of pottery, and small squares of tessellated pavement, are frequently unearthed.

The course of Ermine Street, as it passes by Castor can be easily traced, and the outline of other Roman roads radiating out from Durobrivæ.

When the Romans left Britain, the name of the town was changed to *Caer Dorm*. The Saxons, in their turn, called it *Dormundescastre*, and later, in 650 A.D., when S. Kyneburgha came and established her convent by the Nen, the name changed to *Kyneburgecastre*, which later was shortened to *Castor*.

A few extracts from Gibson's *History of Castor*, 1800, may be of interest.

“In the year 946 Aedred, King of the Mercians, at the instance of Turketul, who had been his chancellor, and was then Abbot of Croyland, gave timber and stones for the rebuilding of that monastery, from the nearest woods and quarries, pertaining to his royal manor of *Castre*.”

King Edgar, on the rebuilding of Medeshamstead (Peterborough) Monastery, gives the lordship of Castre to the Monastery, 970.

“At the general survey (William I), the Abbey of Burgh held 3 hides in Castre.....There was a Mill with annual rent of 8/-.

“The profits to the Convent from the Manor in Castre were valued, in the 26th year Henry I, at 6/- with 12 bushels of wheat, and 12 of malt, and meal for pottage.

“Upon a green balk in Castre field, descending to Gunwade Ferry (now Milton Ferry)... are two stones... called Robin Hood and Little John, from a false tradition of two arrows having been shot thither, by them, from Alwalton Churchyard. But as we are informed by Mr. Gunton, they were set up as evidence that the carriages of stone from Barnack Pits, to be conveyed by Gunwade Ferry to St. Edmund's Bury might pass that way without paying toll. These stones are nicked in the top like arrows, in memory, it is supposed, of S. Edmund, who was shot to death with arrows by the Danes.”



Printed by
The Peterborough Press, Ltd.,
Cross Street,
Peterborough

B 22674





SPECIMEN OF ROMAN
EARTHENWARE MADE
AT CASTOR.